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The term *Central Europe* implies the notion that there is a middle or a center and assumes that the borders are clearly defined. The exact location of these borders and when their center lies depends, however, on the point of view or question asked. If one asks for the geographical center of the continent, the answer will be different based on if one is searching for the historical, economic, political, or cultural center. It also makes a difference if one is considering Europe from an internal or an external perspective. Europe is a 2,500-year-old construct, which is based on Greek mythology (in it, Europe is the daughter of the Phoenician king and Zeus's mistress) and which today expresses itself in the idea of a federation of states. This construct is composed of many independent national states, each of which has developed its own notions of its significance for the European Union. From that standpoint, it is valid to speak of several centers, or of Europe as a decentralized formation whose unique quality lies in its diversity and plurality. Nevertheless, there are places in Europe on which historical activities are concentrated, where the origins of traditions can be identified, and where particularly sustainable developments are to be observed. That is where the sovereign right to construct or interpret matters, or power, gathers (e.g., in Brussels, the headquarters of the European Union) from where it beams out across the surrounding territories. That is what is meant when referring to Central Europe. This entry discusses the development of European music, including Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Jewish and Christian antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as European folk and entertainment music.

The geographical center of Europe is to be found, depending on the historical situation, the method of measurement applied, and the surveyors at work, in Poland, in the Czech Republic, or in Germany. However, other locations in the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Belgium also get mentioned in this connection. This fact alone makes clear how sensitive the question of the center is. Naming these national states at least makes it possible to narrow down the circle of relevant countries.

Early Evidence of Music in Ancient Greece

There is no doubt that the origins or notional center of today's Europe lie in ancient Greece, which from the 8th century B.C.E. to the 2nd century C.E. covered a large area in the northeastern region of the Mediterranean. Its historical significance is connected with various achievements in the fields of politics (genesis of democracy), culture (origin of philosophy), and economy (first mints), each of which was mutually dependent on the others. Very little evidence remains of music in the times of the Ancient Greeks. The lyre and the cithara, both stringed instruments, appear on many illustrations of the period, which shows how widespread they were. They are also mentioned regularly in the writings of Ancient Greek poets, for example, those by Pindar, Euripides, and Horace, usually in connection with simple lyrical solo pieces or with choirs. For scientific pioneers, such as Pythagoras, Euclid, and Ptolemy, the monochord served as an exemplary instrument for the expression and explanation of their first considerations with regard to musical theory. References to ethical and aesthetic thoughts with respect to music or musical ideas are also to be found in the mythology and the philosophical writings of their ancestors, such as Hesiod and Plato.

Musical Differentiation in the Roman Empire

The powerful position of Ancient Greece was successively undermined and taken over by the Roman Empire, which, in the 3rd century C.E. was at the moment of its greatest expansion, ruled the whole of the Mediterranean area, including parts of Africa and Asia. Consequently, there was an inevitable exchange of musical activity with other cultural groups (e.g., the Orient). What was new was the increased combination of different arts (theater, circus, dance, and popular music) in the form of major events or spectacles. This led to an aesthetic backlash or differentiation by the higher classes of society, which both returned to old, religion-based, rural music traditions, and began reflecting on a sort of meta-music. Some of them saw rational contemplation as the only appropriate behavior with respect to music. Musical life in the Roman Empire (with Rome and

Alexandria as its cultural centers) accordingly established itself as different, with the result that lyrical-spiritual chants and singing stood in direct opposition to military music and decadent folk-dancing songs.

Church Music in Jewish and Christian Antiquity

It is generally claimed that its written form, in the shape of a separately developed notation, is the essential characteristic of Central European music. However, this neglects the fact that there are no sources that can prove that a fixed written form of music existed before the 10th century C.E. It is assumed that up until that point music was passed on orally. Several melodies and single-voice songs succeeded in being preserved over several centuries; this was possible only because an institutional framework had been established (e.g., church services) which kept the oral tradition alive. To begin with, there were 150 Jewish psalms, which also formed the liturgical basis for early Christianity (the Old Testament). The words of these psalms were written down for the first time approximately 500 years before Christ but without their corresponding melodies. The actual texts of the psalms had, up to the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, primarily been passed down orally. The psalm singers therefore had to memorize the words and melodies to 150 songs, which is a remarkable feat of memory. It was not rare for the melodies to vary only slightly. The melodic framework remained the same. Minor variations occurred within the rhythmic and harmonic execution. Thus, gradually, the repertoire was extended, not least through new Christian texts, which were then combined with the original Jewish canticles. Through the spread of Jewish and Christian beliefs in the whole of Europe (with centers in Jerusalem and Rome), a robust and sustainable clerical music tradition developed, based on the permanent repetition of a relatively manageable quantity of monophonic choral. Especially in the so-called *Gregorian chorales* of the Schola cantorum in Rome (from 600 C.E.), a highly developed church singing culture manifested itself on the threshold to the Middle Ages.

Notation and Part Music in the Middle Ages

It was to take another couple of centuries before these chorales—that is to say the Roman Catholic church's single voice, usually unaccompanied, liturgical singing in Latin—were fixed for the first time as written music. Only from the 10th century onward did options for composing appear. This later led to an increase in the possibilities for melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic variations, culminating in the polyphony of the Late Middle Ages.

It was above all the addition of a second, and sometimes even a third and fourth voice, that marked the first significant developmental stage. It took the form of a written instruction concerning how the voices were to be used or sung in relation to one another (organal style), in which the singers restricted themselves to the simple intervals (fourths, fifths, and octaves). The expansion of the Kingdom of Franconia and the Christianization of Northern Europe were preconditions for the spread of early part music on the basis of this organal style. To be precise, however, one can really only speak of notated music in connection with the collections of compositions from Winchester, Limoges, Paris, and Santiago de Compostela (11th–13th centuries).

Far apart from each other, in England, France, and Spain's monasteries and churches, Composing Schools were formed. Each developed independent notation and composition techniques, thereby helping part music to its first flourishing. This productivity yielded modal and mensural notation as well as the composition forms of the motet (vocal) and the hoquetus (instrumental). Virtually nothing is known about the unnotated, secular music of Central European farmer-peasants, craftsmen, or princes and nobility from the time preceding the 13th century. Only very few sources, such as the so-called summer round *Sumer is icumen* from the late 13th century (discovered in what is now England), enable retrospective conclusions about the presumably widespread practice of both vocal and instrumental, multipart improvisation.

In the 14th century, in what is now France and Italy, new compositional stages of development were achieved,

with descriptions such as *Ars nova* and *Trecento*. The French *Ars nova* is strongly connected with the composers Philippe de Vitry and Guillaume de Machaut, with the isorhythmic motet, the multipart mass, and the secular rondeau and descant singing. The Italian *Trecento* bears the stamp of composers such as Jacopo of Bologna or Francesco Landini, who principally created secular, lyrically demanding, and polyphonic songs in the form of a *ballata*, a *caccia*, or a madrigal.

Modern Music and the Creation of National Styles

These were the forerunners to the creation of national styles and compositional strengths that were to put their stamp upon Europe as it entered the modern age in the Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries. From a cultural perspective, the center of European musical development shifted to the north. Many important composers of the time came from a region that included today's the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and parts of Northern France, belonging back then to the Duchy of Burgundy. The term *Franco-Flemish* is the name given by music historians to this regional group of composers. In the period between roughly 1430 and 1600, it covers five generations of composers, including, for instance, Guillaume Dufay (first generation), Johannes Ickenham (second generation), Josquin Desprez (third generation), Adrian Willaert (fourth generation), and Orlando di Lasso (fifth generation). The historical significance of the Franco-Flemish School can be put down to the fact that these composers worked all over Europe in the course of their lives, not least in major cities such as Paris, Rome, and Munich. What united them was their dedication to vocal polyphony (i.e., the three- or four-part counterpoint setting), which was used for both clerical and secular texts. Sometimes individual voices (primarily the tenor or bass) were performed instrumentally. The white mensural notation established itself as the new technique for writing music down, since, for pragmatic reasons, it dispensed with filling in the heads of the notes.

Alongside the concentration of compositional innovations in the Franco-Flemish area, there was a corresponding sharpening of the national musical profile on the territories of what is now Italy, Spain, Germany, and England. In Italy, the so-called *Roman School* (mainly represented by Palestrina) enriched sung spiritual music in the papal chapel (motets and masses) with a previously unknown balance between homophone and polyphone parts. During almost the same period, the Venetian School established itself around Adrian Willaert, distributing multiple choirs inside the church that then took turns singing, declaring this as their primary organizing principle. In Spain, a multipart, secular vocal tradition developed, which found its greatest expression in the *Villancico* (Spanish for farmer or peasant) form, further characterized by homophonic phrasing, clear cadences, and dance-like changes in time or tempo. In Germany, the organ became the center of attention, and new playing and notation techniques were developed (e.g., improvised forms such as preludes and tabulators with notes, letters, and figures). In England, numerous compositions evolved for the virginal, which is related to the spinet and cembalo. In addition, many consorts were formed, mixed wind and string ensembles which performed motet-like instrumental works. These went by the name of *In nomine* compositions.

Baroque Concert Life: Between Pluralism and the Principle of Uniformity

The composition technique of thorough (or figured) bass—also known as *basso continuo*—arose in the early 17th century and developed during the course of the 18th century into the unifying principle in a European concert of styles. This overflowing plurality of styles, which found expression in ever newer descriptions of genres (e.g., accompanied vocal, opera, and oratorio; Concerto grosso; solo concert; orchestral suite; ballet music) and many theoretical publications, appeared at first sight to be impossible to reduce to a lowest common denominator. In retrospect, however, it shows that practically all musical styles from this period took the

thorough bass as their basis, except for those compositions for unaccompanied solo instruments. With the thorough bass, an independent and continuous bass part was added to the melody voice that was furnished with numbers and characters. These numbers and characters were ciphers for chords, which the thorough bass player had to perform, whereby certain options for variations were at his or her disposal. This filling in of chord parts in real time required a rapid grasp, solid theoretical knowledge of music, and a talent for improvisation. Alongside this fundamental innovation came others, such as the major-minor harmonics superseding the old church tunes, then the concerto principle (the individualization, embellishment, and interaction of the separate voices in a composition), the monody (a form of emotionally sung aria in imitation of language rhythm), and finally the invention of the modern bar system.

The localization of all these developments could happen only at the cost of severe simplification. The secular genre of opera began in Italy (notably in Florence) and was decisively influenced by Claudio Monteverdi. Johann Sebastian Bach upheld church music, which had grown in strength in Central Germany, and continued with the organ tradition, taking it (especially in his time in Leipzig) to previously undreamt of heights of performance and composition. Georg Friedrich Händel, who likewise came from the territory of today's Germany, spent a major part of his life in London, England, advancing to become celebrated throughout Europe a composer of oratorio. In France, the emphasis was on the cembalo, for which many subtle and elegant compositions were made. The outstanding composer in this connection was Francois Couperin, who worked at the court of Louis XIV in Paris.

Revolution and the Creation of a European Musical Identity in the 19th Century

In the middle of the 18th century in Central Europe, it was the urban bourgeoisie or middle class that, following the French Revolution in 1789, made gains in its social influence. Abolishing the nobility, enlightenment; establishing human rights, democracy; and founding the republic were the main political aims of the period. These led subsequently to the creation of a community of values for the whole of Europe, with music also affected by developments. The increase in the number of musical centers was striking. Previously, European musical life had been concentrated in only a few major cities such as Rome, Paris, or London. Then, increasingly, German cities like Berlin, Mannheim, Dresden, or Leipzig joined in, as well as Vienna, Austria's modern capital.

In these places, civic city orchestras formed, emerging as a rule from smaller orchestras at court. Sonatas for small ensembles gradually developed into large symphonies with several movements, still based on the sonata phrasing. In the course of the 19th century, together with opera, the symphony developed into the predominant genre, and the orchestras which played them rapidly increased in size, in some cases having up to 100 musicians. These were organized into various instrumental groups (principally string, woodwind, and brass instruments), plus smaller numbers of percussion, plucking, and keyboard instruments. Concert halls and opera houses were built as venues that could accommodate audiences of several hundred people.

German Austrian composers such as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven created symphonies and operas which, on account of their mutual self-referencing and compositional similarities, came to be known as (First) Viennese Classic and thus mark the music history step from the 18th into the 19th century. Features they had in common were fully notated, continuous accompanying parts in the form of eighths and sixteenths, instruments taking turns to lead the melody (pierced style), and a pregnant motif and thematic working. However, it was not only monumental instrumental works or operas that embodied the new musical spirit of the times but also chamber music for small groups, for example, for string quartets or piano trios.

The idea of absolute or free, independent, and detached music was born. This was music that stood for itself

and did not have to serve any other functions, music that had to satisfy only itself and its own artistic demands. It was accompanied by an upgrading of the musician or creative composer. At the end of the 18th century, their autonomy still had to be laboriously fought for, similar to the political struggles for freedom during the French Revolution and the upheavals in Central Europe in the middle of the 19th century (on German, Austrian, Italian, and Swiss territories). These emancipatory ambitions became more than apparent in music-related writings and, above all, in the newly established music journalism of the time. On occasion, these went as far as to become excessive and promised a cult of genius. Absolute music was then declared to be a substitute for religion, and successful composers (e.g., Richard Wagner) and instrumental virtuosos (e.g., Franz Liszt) were raised to the status of *Übermensch*, or god like creations. The seed of history and academia in music, as well as the search for its place in world events, was a consequence of the severe social and cultural upheavals of the time, against which people sought to find something enduring. *Romanticism* celebrated a retreat into the private sphere, with each person's individuality and emotional life emphasized. At the forefront was a return to unsullied nature and the simple way of life, as depicted in myths, fairy tales, and folk songs. This romantic feeling for life produced a number of exceptional works, which in turn formed the foundation for new musical genres, such as the artistic song with piano accompaniment (e.g., Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Hugo Wolf). The piano was established as the central instrument of the 19th century and was a fixture in a bourgeois home. The industrialization of piano production and printed sheet music made this possible. Together with countless compositions for solo piano, private living rooms rang to the sound of two or four-handed excerpts taken from symphonies and operas, usually played by bourgeois daughters.

At the end of the 19th century, several Eastern European composers gained a great deal of attention and thus opened up Central Europe's narrow image of itself as the navel of the musical world. With their symphonies and operas, Russian composers, such as Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Piotr Tchaikovsky in particular, left a lasting impression on the musical life of Central Europe. At the beginning of the 20th century, the public became further aware of Russian composers like Sergei Rachmaninov, Alexander Scriabin, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich.

The Destruction of the European Centers of Music in the 20th Century

The political intrigues in the first half of the 20th century ended in two World Wars, one shortly after the other. They began in Central Europe and caused massive destruction over a huge area. All towns and cities were affected and, consequently, so was their musical life. It is therefore unsurprising that these catastrophes led to shifts in values and significance that were detrimental to music in Central Europe. Not only had the infrastructure for musical production and composition changed but also the content of the works. The sustainable conquest of the major-minor harmonics (in its purest form in Arnold Schönberg's 12-tone technique) is only one example of how events were dealt with within the European music tradition. As a result of the wars, massive migration occurred, above all to the United States. Central Europe, thus, temporarily lost many important musicians and composers, such as Arnold Schönberg, Edgar Varèse, and Paul Hindemith.

At the same time, the occupation of Central Europe by American troops had far-reaching consequences in the field of music. Through it, American styles such as blues, swing, and rhythm and blues were imported and rapidly found great favor. With the establishment of rock 'n' roll in the middle of the 1950s, the American music industry gained supremacy in Central Europe, which it continues to defend today. Popular music's triumph across the European continent was due to the media dominance of American and English record companies. Although there had always been folk or show music in Europe (and even if this presence was never properly reflected in musicological treatises), Central Europe lost a great deal of its significance in music history. In contrast to the American musical tradition, which makes no clear division between light and serious music, simply treating all musical influences as equal, the middle of Europe is taking care of and administering its own musical heritage. At the same time, it is accepting its almost unfettered buyout by media-driven Amer-

ican pop music. Awareness and knowledge of its own rich European folk and entertainment music is barely recognizable and is devalued in favor of an elitist, academic New Music, which reaches only an infinitely small audience. In the end, however, the continuing immigration of non-Europeans and Europeans from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will lead to a gradual change in the musical identity of Central Europe.

See also [Europe](#); [Europe, British Isles](#); [Europe, Eastern](#); Europe, Northern; [Europe, Southeastern](#); [Europe, Southern](#); [Europe, Western](#)

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